

GETTING THAT TONGUE GOING

Sometimes the child's tongue does not have the flexibility or speed of movement to eat neatly or speak clearly. Here are some ideas to help the tongue move more.

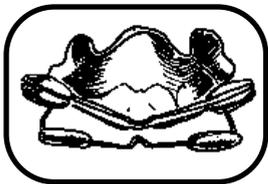
- 1) Putting chips of ice in the mouth, especially before eating.
- 2) Using ice in the same way as described in vibration section. Use a thin icy pole frozen from water in the fridge.
- 3) Freeze cotton buds and run them down the centre of the child's tongue (in the groove) front to back. Allow to swallow in between.
- 4) Usually the tongue will move towards where you are touching in the mouth. If this happens you can play games with the tongue.

Games to play with the tongue

- moving in and out like a lizard
- big slow movements like licking a plate
- wagging the tongue from side to side like a snake
- licking your lips like a crocodile after his last meal
- clicking your tongue
- pretending to be a cat and licking your paws
- in the mirror pushing the tongue against the cheeks
- putting different tastes and textures in the mouth can help the tongue to move around in the mouth. Try things like vegemite, peanut butter, hundreds and thousands, flavoured spreads. Put a little bit on the top lip, on the bottom lip, at the side of the mouth. Place the textures so the child needs to use tongue to get to the 'reward'

Using a full intra oral appliances such as ISMAR's

(Innsbruck Sensori-Motor Activator and Regulator)



ISMAR

The ISMAR's are designed to provide stability for the jaw in order to develop lip and tongue ability. There are a number of different designs. For those children with good steady jaws you might only use an upper plate. The plates are designed to fit in the mouth and encourage the lips and tongue to move using different movements than usual. The design of the plates needs the assistance of a dentist and a speech pathologist. Your child needs to be able to tolerate having an impression taken and also the putting in and taking out of the appliance. Every few weeks the plates are altered, eg putting grooves into the plate or attaching beads. This makes it feel different and then the child's tongue is encouraged to explore the inside of the mouth more. The ISMAR is only used for short periods of time, about 2-3 minutes, building up to 30 minutes. Once this is achieved only then can they be worn overnight as 'passive therapy'. The devices are worn for a few weeks or up to five years depending on your child's goals and abilities. Your child needs to be able to breathe through his/her nose.

If you are interested in trying the ISMAR please contact the dental department at the Royal Children's Hospital and make an appointment. You will need to be able to attend several times in order to make a successful device.